

# Toussaint L'Ouverture, Negro Revolutionary Hero

By CYRIL BRIGGS.

ONE method of defeating the imperialist ideology of white superiority and its concomitant of Negro inferiority which, by playing to the vanity of the undeveloped white workers enables the United States imperialists to carry out their policy of imperialist aggression and oppression in Haiti, Central America, etc., and working class disruption at home, is to acquaint the workers with the truth about the race question, the achievements of the Negro race, their revolutionary traditions, and, finally the thorough repudiation given the imperialist ideology of racial superiority and inferiority by science.

This article is concerned with the historical angle. The imperialist ideology of white superiority is overwhelmingly refuted in history. Perhaps nowhere more strikingly than in the Haitian revolution, which was a successful rebellion of Negro slaves against the might and power of the French bourgeoisie. The first and only successful slave revolt in history! Where Spartacus and his brave legions had failed, the Negro slaves of Haiti succeeded! To quote from the Boston, December 1861 speech of the abolitionist, Wendell Phillips, "there never was a race that, weakened and degraded by such chattel slavery, tore off its own fetters, forged them into swords, and won its liberty on the battle field, but one, and that was the black race of St. Domingo."

## "The Opening."

The principal leader of the Haitian Revolution was Toussaint L'Ouverture — named by his soldiers "L'Ouverture," the opening. Toussaint L'Ouverture was fifty years old when first he saw an army. He appeared on the scene of struggle

after there had already been several slave insurrections. It is believed he secretly encouraged these insurrections but preferred to hold himself in the background until the movement had gathered sufficient momentum.

At the time of his appearance on the scene as a revolutionary leader the island was torn with strife between various groups and classes. The revolutionary slaves, numbering some five hundred thousand, were opposed to and opposed by all the other groups. Thirty thousand white planters, grimly determined to maintain their rights to hold human beings as chattel property; twenty-five thousand mulattoes, owning one-third of the real estate of the island and aspiring to social equality and quite willing to collaborate in the oppression of the slaves; a triumphant Spanish army on the east, a British force entrenched on the north. These were the factors in the revolutionary scene.

## Defeat British.

Within seven years, the blacks had defeated the mulattoes and forced their co-operation (the more willingly given because of the realization that the white planters would never recognize their claims to social equality) and the joint forces, under the leadership of Toussaint, Christophe, Dessalines, Francois, and others, had smashed the Spanish army and consolidated the island for the first time in its history. They had defeated the British and sent them skulking back to their base at Jamaica. Still holding the island in the name of France, they set about constructing a prosperous and happy community.

In the meantime, however, the French revolution, which had given its first inspiration to the Haitian Revolution had definitely turned into

bourgeois reaction. Napoleon had risen to power. Victorious in Europe and determined to crown himself emperor of France, Napoleon, deemed it necessary to send some of the best republican troops outside of France. In Haiti he saw his opportunity. Thirty thousand French troops, "who had never known defeat," were sent to re-enslave the Haitians. The whole imperialist world joined wholeheartedly in the movement. Holland lent sixty ships of the line for the enterprise. England by special message offered her neutrality. The United States maintained acquiescent silence. The self-emancipated Negroes looked out on a hostile world arrayed against them.

## The French Armada.

The French Armada came. The Haitians withdrew their families to the hills. Toussaint issued his famous order to "burn the cities, destroy the harvest, tear up the roads with cannon, poison the wells, show the white man the hell he comes to make." The Haitians met the attempt to re-enslave them with war to the hilt. They met the tyrants with a vengeance in every way as terrible as their own. They attacked the French forces as they were effecting a landing, fought them hand to hand in the streets of the city for hours, and finally drove them back to their boats. The French finally effected a landing, but they could not conquer the self-emancipated Negroes. They therefore resorted to treachery. They offered peace with liberty. Toussaint believed them and accepted a peace for his ragged, hungry army, they tricked him and shipped him off to France where by Napoleon's orders he was murdered in the dungeon of a chateau in the Alps.

With the betrayal of Toussaint, the Haitians rushed to arms and the

strife began anew. Bloodier than ever. New tortures, new cruelties devised by the French, new fortitude and outstanding daring and courage by the Negroes of Haiti. Napoleon rushed another thirty thousand troops: The Napoleonic prestige must be upheld. But the new forces suffered the fate of the old. As Toussaint L'Ouverture had told his captors he had planted the seeds of freedom so deeply that not the whole of the imperialist world could destroy them.

May Twentieth is the birthday of this great Haitian revolutionary leader, and on that day throughout the country Negro and white workers will join, under the auspices of the American Negro Labor Congress, in commemorating the memory of Toussaint L'Ouverture. Every revolutionary worker should attend these memorial meetings.

## Misleader Boasts of Friendly Relations with Elevator Boss

SAN FRANCISCO (By Mail).—Frank Feeney, reactionary president of the International Union of Elevator Constructors, boasted at the union's convention here that "the union has been free of strikes and lockouts."

"We have always maintained friendly relations with the employers," the misleader stated. This condition has resulted in static wages for the builders, and was brought about, it is charged, by Feeney's relations with the bosses.

For a Six-Hour Day for Underground Work, in Dangerous Occupations, and for the Youth Under 18!